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Hello? The Antarctic Calling...

UNH climate change researchers hard at work at the bottom of the world check in with their lifeline to the outside world

By [Carmelle Druchniak](#)

UNH News Bureau

EDITORS, NEWS DIRECTORS:

If you are interested in doing a story on the progress of the Antarctic mission, a phone call from Paul Mayewski, currently living and working in Antarctica as part of the International Trans Antarctic Scientific Expedition, can be arranged. For information, call Zach Smith at the UNH Climate Change Research Center, 603-862-0097, or Carmelle Druchniak, UNH News Bureau, at 603-862-1462.

DURHAM, N.H. -- Every afternoon at three o'clock, Zach Smith gets a phone call.

It's long distance, about as long as you can get -- from University of New Hampshire researchers in Antarctica. Paul Mayewski, director of the UNH Climate Change Research Center, and his band of explorers phone the UNH campus each day to report on their activities as part of the International Trans Antarctic Scientific Expedition (ITASE).

The calls come after the team has breakfast, says Smith, before the day's work begins. They generally last 10 to 15 minutes and include routine information -- weather conditions, work schedule -- as well as the occasional personal message to a team member's family, answers to questions from students posted on the ITASE web site and the latest UNH hockey scores.

ITASE -- headed by Mayewski, who pioneered the use of ice cores in climate change research -- will result in the first-ever comprehensive climate record of the Antarctic. Over the next four years, international teams will follow prescribed routes, stopping every 100 kilometers or so, drilling ice core samples, and continuing on. These ice cores will give scientists a better understanding of the variations in the current climate across the entire continent of Antarctica and a look back in time into Antarctic's ancient climatic environments.

Part of Smith's job as the Climate Change Research Center's educational program coordinator is to provide a link for the Mayewski team to the outside world. He writes up their transmissions for posting on the Museum of Science Web site monitoring the ITASE project. The Boston museum also broadcasts live conversations with team members each Wednesday and Saturday until Dec. 18 in its Wright Theater.

Smith also uses information from the ITASE program and other Climate Change Research Center projects -- the center is within the UNH Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space -- to develop curricula for teachers and students to assist them in understanding climate change. Oftentimes, Smith and other center members visit schools to present the information.

Archived transmissions and other information can be found at the ITASE Web site, at <http://www.secretsoftheice.org/index.html>

Information from Smith's calls also is archived on the site.

For example the Nov. 28 call detailed the team's Thanksgiving repast, enjoyed as the weather offered a chilly minus-15 degrees Celsius, with a wind chill of 36 Celsius degrees below zero.

"At Byrd camp, under partly cloudy skies with blowing snow, the ITASE team attended to last minute details before they start off tomorrow on the first leg of their overland journey. Everyone is anxious to start drilling ice cores. Last night the ITASE team and the staff at Byrd camp had their Thanksgiving dinner. It was a traditional family style dinner with turkey, mashed potatoes, and the works. As the team works off dinner they will finish lashing down equipment on the sleds and prepare for tomorrow's departure."

The following day, at a temperature of minus-19 degrees Celsius, "the ITASE team is packed up and ready to roll out of Byrd camp on the first leg of their traverse route. Mark (Twickler), the assistant field leader, hopes that snow and ice sampling can start as early as tomorrow. The weather in Antarctica, as well as in many parts of the globe, is a little unusual this fall. Even though there have been a number of weather delays already this field season, the team will still try to complete its proposed sampling schedule for this year."

Smith notes the team was delayed longer than expected at McMurdo, where they landed by plane in late October. Its departure to Byrd camp was repeatedly

delayed due to low visibility, so the team is behind in its scheduled ice core drilling.

As for his daily calls, Smith says the team member assigned to the duty is UNH graduate student Tyler Cruikshank, and the calls can become routine. "It's like having to write a letter every day," says Smith.

November 30, 1999

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